



# Namib Trailblazers:

## A Journey of Strength and Sisterhood

*It's International Women's Day on March 8. Last year, for the second time, a group of extraordinary women from around the globe embarked on an unparalleled adventure — the Namib Desert Expedition — a journey of transformation, resilience, and empowerment.*

words by Sonja Piontek | photographs by Michaela Goldmann and Sonja Piontek

In the heart of the world's oldest desert lies a story of resilience, transformation, deep bonding, and boundless beauty. This is not just another exclusive escape; it's an odyssey through one of the Earth's most untamed landscapes.

For these accomplished women, it was not a vacation. It was a statement. A declaration of courage, ambition, and the desire to redefine themselves and life's possibilities in the face of the unknown. Among them were entrepreneurs, doctors, and executives, all taking on the challenge with a blend of determination and depth.

The Namib Desert, spanning over 55 million years, is a masterpiece of raw nature. Its sweeping dunes, infinite horizons, and mesmerizing silence create a canvas seemingly untouched by time. However, for these women, the desert's allure was not just its unparalleled beauty but also its brutal honesty.

*"Walking through the Namib is an experience that strips away pretense and allows you to focus on what really counts in life," shares Martina Manich, Austrian CEO and one of last year's participants. "In the vastness of the Namib, there are no distractions — only sand, sun, and your thoughts... and even those disappear at times. It's in this stillness that you find clarity."*

The journey spanned 120 kilometers on foot, crossing spectacular terrain under the golden African sun. Over five unforgettable days, the women braved not only the physical challenge of long daily treks but also the emotional intensity of introspection and vulnerability.





**A Journey of Transformation**

What sets the Namib Desert Expedition apart from other adventures is its transformative essence. It is not merely about crossing the desert; it is about crossing into a new realm of possibilities and a new chapter of life.

For Martina, the expedition also mirrored the dynamics of leadership. *“The dunes we conquered could be compared to tackling challenges in business,” she shares. “In both arenas, success is built on preparation, resilience, determination, and a strong team.”*

**Luxury Redefined**

Despite the demanding nature of the expedition, comfort and care were seamlessly woven into the experience. Each afternoon, the participants arrived at a newly established campsite, set up in breathtaking locations by the expedition team. With no permanent infrastructure, the team brought in everything needed to create a comfortable haven, including the rare indulgence of a 10-litre warm shower at the end of each day.

The campsites also featured proper sit-down toilets — affectionately named ‘loo with a view’ — offering breathtaking vistas. Even in the midst of this untamed wilderness, these small touches added a layer of comfort and awe.

The culinary experience was extraordinary, thanks to a dedicated desert kitchen team led by two local chefs. The meals were a feast for the senses, every bite crafted to nourish and energize.

**The Unmatched Route**

The expedition’s route takes participants deep into the Namib Desert, traversing a variety of landscapes — majestic dunes, vast desert plains, and unspoiled wilderness that feels almost otherworldly.

The culmination of this epic crossing comes on the final day, at the legendary shipwreck of the half-buried Eduard Bohlen, marking the meeting of desert and sea, a place where nature’s immense forces collide. *“I didn’t think I was going to make it... But now that I have conquered the Namib Desert, I know I can achieve anything in life,” reflects Ivy Russell, a Singapore-based investor who had joined the initial expedition in 2023, as she stood, teary-eyed, on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. “This journey is proof of what’s possible when you push beyond your limits in a group of like-minded souls.”*

**Beyond the Desert**

The journey extends beyond the desert itself. The experience begins with a stay at a leading safari lodge, where participants meet in person for the first time. This opening chapter allows them to embrace the continent’s beauty through game drives, wildlife spotting, and soaking in the magic of the African wilderness.

On the eve of the desert crossing, the group receives an exclusive invitation from the widow of the late chief of the local Topnaar community, one of Namibia’s oldest and most resilient tribes. In her modest farmhouse, participants are treated to an intimate evening of heartfelt hospitality and deep cultural connection — a rare and touching encounter that sets the stage for the journey ahead.

After the desert crossing, the adventure continues with a thrilling off-road drive in 4x4 vehicles, from the Eduard Bohlen shipwreck back to civilization. This journey traverses dune ranges and the wild Atlantic coast, with an overnight stay in Swakopmund, Namibia’s charming coastal town. A final stop at the masterful Okahandja Woodcraft Market offers participants a chance to take home a piece of Namibia’s artistry.

The expedition concludes in a deeply moving way at Penduka, a women-led initiative in Namibia’s largest township, Katutura, on the outskirts of Windhoek. This final chapter is a celebration of gratitude and community, where perspectives shift, friendships are formed, and the spirit of Africa lingers long after the journey ends.

**A Call to the Courageous**

The Namib Desert Expedition is not for the faint-hearted. Many aspire to join, but few qualify, as it calls to those who not only dare to dream but are willing to push boundaries and rediscover their essence. It is for women who refuse to settle for mediocrity and who see challenges as opportunities to grow. *“This is not just a journey through the desert; it’s a journey to new opportunities and a new, stronger self. If you’re ready to embrace the extraordinary, this experience will change your life. As it certainly has changed mine.”* – Martina Manich ❖

**TRAVEL INFORMATION & CONTACT DETAILS**

**The Expedition**

- **Duration:** 10 days (6 days in the desert, 5 trekking on foot)
- **Route:** A 120-kilometre trek through the Namib Desert, from Homeb to the Eduard Bohlen shipwreck on the Atlantic Ocean.
- **Distance:** Approximately 25 km per day, split into three sections.
- **Highlights:** Explore untouched landscapes, bond with like-minded women, and experience profound personal transformation.

**The Organizer**

- Sonja Piontek is a SPIEGEL bestselling author, entrepreneur, and former BMW Asia Marketing Director. She is the founder of Sonnenkind Pte Ltd, an award-winning boutique travel agency in Singapore. Known for her bold approach to life, she empowers her clients and redefines what’s possible. Expedition 2025 bookings now open. Get on an evaluation call to see if you qualify:  
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